

May 26, 2000

To: Medicare + Choice Organizations

From: Gary Bailey
Director, Health Plan Administration
Center for Health Plans and Providers

Subject: Introducing the Medicare + Choice Quality Review Organizations
(M+C/QROs)

Background

The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA) requires that all Medicare+Choice organizations (M+COs) have in place a quality assessment and performance improvement (QAPI) program. The Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) has been charged with assuring compliance with the BBA and the Quality Improvement System for Managed Care (QISMC) is the principal tool for enhancing plans' current quality assurance efforts.

Four regional Peer Review Organizations (PROs) have been selected through a competitive process to assist HCFA in designing and implementing a protocol for reviewing the M+CO QAPI projects. These four organizations, formerly referred to as "QISPROs", have been designated as the Medicare+Choice Quality Review Organizations (M+C/QRO) for the purposes of this work, which include:

1. Providing technical assistance to HCFA's Regional Office (RO) Managed Care staff in evaluating the design, implementation and outcomes of M+COs' quality assessment and performance improvement projects;
2. Developing a consistent protocol for assessing whether M+COs succeed in meeting their 10% reductions in performance gaps,
3. Designing a consistent report format to be utilized in the evaluation of each QISMC- related QAPI project;
4. Developing a system and database for tracking QAPI project focus areas and targeted diseases by M+CO, plan and region.

Collaboration with state PROs

We recognize the continuing role of the local PRO in supporting the M+CO's quality program with respect to provision of technical assistance in planning, design and implementation of QAPI studies. M+C/QROs will not provide technical assistance to the M+COs regarding the QAPI study process. The sole M+C/QRO task will be review and evaluation of the final outcomes of the QAPI projects relative to the targets identified in the study design. They will provide a recommendation to HCFA Regional Office staff who will maintain responsibility for the final decision regarding M+COs success in meeting their QAPI objectives. Therefore, questions regarding data analysis, development of quality indicators, interventions, etc. will continue to be the responsibility of the local PROs or, if the M+CO is not working with a PRO, the purview of the HCFA Regional Office Managed Care staff.

In addition, none of the M+C/QROs will be assigned to review M+CO QAPI projects conducted within their own states. Contract awards and distribution of M+C QAPI projects was based, in part, on distribution of M+COs per HCFA Managed Care region. This process will minimize travel costs and facilitate consistent communication between the RO staff, M+C/QROs and the M+COs to which they are assigned. Therefore, M+C/QRO contacts (see Table 1) will coincide with the indicated HCFA Managed Care Regional Office to which M+COs presently report.

Planning timelines for QAPI Project Reviews

To assist the M+C/QROs in beginning development of a timeline for conducting QAPI project reviews, your assistance in providing the information below is requested. Please return this form (see Table 2) via email to your designated M+C/QRO Regional Coordinator or contact them by phone at the numbers given below by June 8, 2000. If you have any questions about this request for information, please feel free to call the M+C/QRO coordinator in your HCFA region or HCFA Regional Office staff.

We appreciate your assistance in this matter and look forward to sharing with you a summary overview of the final review protocol and other information about this important national initiative. Questions associated with the review process and the role of the M+C/QROs should be addressed to the HCFA MC/QRO Project Officer, Ms. Judy Bragdon, MS, RN (jbragdon@hcfa.gov, 410-786-1037) or Kathy Winchester (kwinchester@hcfa.gov, 410-786-6868), Task Leader for the Task 3 of the PRO 6th Scope of Work at Central Office.

Table 1.

M+C/QRO Assignments and Designated Coordinators

HCFA PRO Region	M+C/QRO	HCFA Managed Care Region	M+C/QRO Coordinators
Boston, MA	Island Peer Review Organization	Boston, New York, Philadelphia	Gina Hill Phone: 516-326-7767 email: ghill@ipro.org
Dallas, TX	Delmarva Foundation for Medical Care, Inc.	Dallas, Atlanta	Marci Kramer Phone: 410-763-6240 email: mkramer@dfmc.org
Kansas City, MO	Colorado Foundation for Medical Care.	Kansas City, Chicago	Geri Fahrenbrink Phone: 303-695-3300 email: coprogfahrenbrink@sdps.org
Seattle, WA	California Medical Review, Inc.	Seattle, Denver, San Francisco	Linda Sawyer Phone: 415-677-2126 email: capro.lsawyer@sdps.org

Table 2.

QISMC QUALITY IMPROVEMENT STUDIES FOR MEDICARE+CHOICE

Plan Name: _____

HCFA Identifier #: _____

City, State: _____

Quality Improvement Contact Person: _____

Phone: _____ **Fax:** _____ **email address:** _____

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT STUDY	PROJECT TOPIC	INITIATION DATE (Data Collection Start Date)	COMPLETION DATE (Project Expected End Date - at end of first remeasurement)	QUALITY INDICATOR(S) (Stated in Numerator/Denominator Format)
HCFA 1999 NATIONAL PROJECT - DIABETES				
M+CO 1999 OPTIONAL TOPIC				
HCFA 2000 NATIONAL PROJECT - PNEUMONIA				
M+CO 2000 OPTIONAL TOPIC				